

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8525

INFO AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USINT ALGIERS

USMISSION USUN

S E C R E T PARIS 09816

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, NG

SUBJECT: FURTHER FRENCH VIEWS ON NIGER COUP

REF: PARIS 9389

1. DURING CHANCE MEETING AT QUAI, APRIL 22,
REMOVILLE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR FRANCOPHONE AFRICA,
PRESENTED EMBOFF WITH QUITE ANOTHER VERSION OF THE
ORIGINS OF NIGER'S COUP FROM THAT REPORTED REFTEL.
DIORI, HE SAID, HAD NOT CONSULTED WITH HIS OWN

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MILITARY, HOUPHOUET OR THE FRENCH BEFORE SIGNING THE

RECENT MUTUAL DEFENSE AGREEMENT WITH LIBYA. DIORI HAD BECOME "HIGHLY SECRETIVE" IN RECENT MONTHS AND WAS PERHAPS ON THE POINT OF ACCEPTING THE LIBYAN PROPOSAL FOR A NIGERO-LIBYAN UNION WHICH, HE SPECULATED, WAS INTENDED TO FORM A WALL BETWEEN ALGERIA AND NIGERIA. REMOVILLE IMPLIED THAT LT. COL. KOUNTCHE WAS AWARE OF DIORI'S ALLEGED INTENTIONS AND THAT KOUNTCHE'S DISAPPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED LINK WITH LIBYA, PLUS HIS DISMAY OVER THE WAY THE NIGER GOVERNMENT WAS HANDLING FAMINE RELIEF, WAS THE BASIC CAUSE OF THE COUP. REMOVILLE ADDED THAT JALLUD ATTEMPTED TO INTEREST NIGER'S NEW LEADERS IN THE LIBYAN SCHEME DURING HIS VISIT TO NIAMEY BUT THAT KOUNTCHE QUICKLY SENT HIM PACKING. WITH OBVIOUS SATISFACTION, REMOVILLE CONCLUDED THAT ALL FRENCH TECHNICAL ADVISORS WILL BE RETAINED BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT BUT THAT NOW THEY WILL BE REQUIRED TO WORK HARDER AND EARN THEIR SALARIES FOR A CHANGE.

2. COMMENT: IN FIVE DAYS, REMOVILLE'S EXPRESSED JUDGMENT OF DIORI HAS GONE FROM SEEMING APPROBATION TO ALMOST HARSH CRITICISM OF THE EX-PRESIDENT AND HIS FOREIGN POLICY INTENTIONS. WHILE WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE FRENCH PLAYED A ROLE IN THE COUP AND ARE HIGHLY DOUBTFUL THAT SUCH IS THE CASE, THE POSSIBILITY CANNOT BE EXCLUDED THAT THEY HAD SOME FOREKNOWLEDGE OF IT. IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY TO US, HOWEVER, THAT PRESENT FRENCH OFFICIAL ENTHUSIASM FOR THE NEW REGIME IS BASED ON THE GOF DESIRE TO CULTIVATE THE APPARENTLY MODERATE MILITARY LEADERS AND TO IMPROVE THEIR IMAGE BY IMPLYING THAT THEY ACTED ONLY WHEN DIORI WAS ABOUT TO SELL OUT NIGER'S REAL INTERESTS TO LIBYA. (WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING TO SUPPORT THE ALLEGATION THAT DIORI, IN FACT, ANTICIPATED MUCH MORE THAN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE LIBYAN CONNECTION.) THE GOF MAY ALSO HOPE TO WIN POINTS WITH THE ALGERIANS AND NIGERIANS WHO MIGHT BE SUFFICIENTLY PERSUADED OF COL. QADHAFI'S UNPREDICTABLE GUILE TO ACCEPT AT FACE VALUE THE LATEST QUAI VERSION OF COUP ORIGINS AND IN CONSEQUENCE,

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BE GRATEFUL FOR KOUNTCHE'S THWARTING LIBYAN MACHINATIONS AGAINST THEM. FINALLY, THE QUAI MAY ALSO WISH TO PUT OTHER FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN LEADERS ON NOTICE THAT CONNECTIONS WITH ARAB AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS OF WHICH THE GOF DOES NOT APPROVE MAY COST THEM DEARLY.

IRWIN

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